Second Language Acquisition and Technology
- Kathy Maughan
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It has often been said that if someone had fallen asleep 100 years ago and awoke today, the only thing that he might recognize is what takes place in a classroom. While that might be true in some locales, there is a transformation quietly taking place in hundreds of thousands of classrooms around the world. I believe that this is true of my classroom. Technology is a technique and tool that I use to tap into all the modalities of the students. However, as important as technology can be in the teaching and learning process, I realize that it is not an end in and of itself. It's there to serve the needs of students and teachers and aid the learning process.

<u>**Narrative description of how technology is currently used in my classroom:**</u>

I teach fourth and fifth graders English as a Second Language (ESL) at the American Falls Intermediate School in American Falls. Acquiring a second language is vital for these students. It is difficult, but it is the key to their success in school and life. Success in reading, math, science, and other subjects depends on the ability to use the English language effectively. The class focuses on development of language in math, reading and language grammar and writing. Building vocabulary is one of our main goals leading to the production of the second language and is useful to students across all content areas. To aide in vocabulary development, students use computers throughout the day with software that allows them to listen to dialogue and respond to prompts. While a student is at the computer, he/she is getting a one-on-one practice with vocabulary and speech production.

Today's computer software offers a variety of interesting ways to learn. At this point in time I have only one software program that focuses directly on the development of vocabulary. It is a colorful interactive program called *KidSpeak*. Its only drawback is that it develops only about one hundred words which is just a beginning for English Language Learners. This grant proposal will add to my ability to increase the number of words students add to their vocabulary through the innovative use of technology and computer software.

I also use the Read Naturally Program in which students use technology to hear and practice reading passages to enhance their reading fluency as well as speech production. This program provides a method to improve reading fluency. Most struggling readers have fluency problems and spend little time reading. Students become fluent readers by reading. Yet in our elementary schools, students read an average of only seven to eight minutes a day (U.S. Department of Education). Struggling readers read even less. This complicates the problem and is not nearly enough time to become proficient at something as difficult as reading.

The program offers students a safe, structured, and highly motivating opportunity to engage in reading on a daily basis. The student listens to a teacher model reading fluently using correct pronunciation. Students then practice reading the passages with the tape. The readings are factual articles which promote learning information while practicing their reading. It has been documented that through this program students will gain on an average of 2 words per week in their reading fluency of words per minute.

In our language class we focus on reading and writing. Students write everyday whether it is as simple as a journal entry or the production of a writing piece. Computers are often used in the final production. Students love to type their stories on the computers and add clipart, colored font, or borders.

In addition, I have an older digital camera that I brought to school to use. Taking pictures always fascinates the students. At times we use these pictures as topics for writing and other times they are used to illustrate the stories, artwork, or keep students interest. For example, when we studied the earthworm, we took pictures as students examined worms and for the final project we

took pictures of the students lying on the floor is shapes which formed the letters for the word
"worms". The students' writings, pictures, worm-picture-title were all put out on the wall in the hall
for other students to see. Pictures generate a lot of interest. Students stop by and read what we
have there. My students go out and read what is written there everyday. What an innovative way
to practice English.

Narrative description of how my use of technology has impacted my students.

The examples described above help keep students' interest. In particular, the use of technology
is very appealing to students. I have found that I have better success in motivating my students
with lessons that use technology than I do with lessons that do not. For example we are currently
studying the eye in my ESL Science class. I have modified the reading material and we have
conducted some experiments with vision, but the activity that excited the students the most was a
web-site on the cow eye. I found a web site
(http://www.exploratorium.edu/learning_studio/cow_eye/) which offers text and video on the eye.
It is on about a fifth grade reading level. The most enhancing part is the videos. A young girl
dissects a cow's eye in these short videos. She takes the students step by step through the parts
of the eye, discussing the purpose of each part of the eye. My students were spell-bound and
excited to watch, but the best part was the amount of information that they took in from these
videos. I had done a pre-knowledge assessment and then again after the students had
completed the information on the web-site and found that their knowledge on the eye had
increased. The only draw back was that we all had to be huddled around one computer, listening
and watching. Yet, with a projector from this grant would allow us all to see on a large screen
and interact more.

Another example of how technology has impacted my students has come about because of the
ISATs. Taking the students results and plugging this information into the Plato software has
individualized the remediation for students in Reading, Math, and Language Arts. Students enjoy
the one-on-one and immediate feedback that the computer programs give. The use of computer
software offers this immediate feedback that I as a teacher can not always get to at the moment.
Using computer software also helps me to track the students progress and needs.

Narrative description of what I am proposing to purchase and how it will enable me to use technology in an innovative manner to enhance learning in my students.

I need additional technology to help motivate my students so that they become engaged, active
participants in the learning process. This grant will fulfill three goals.

Goal One: Purchase digital video camera, VCR tapes and DVDs, and a VCR/DVD player.
Students love to see themselves in pictures or on video. These tools are a great incentive to
encourage students to do better. One of the activities that this project will enable me to provide is
a student produced video newsletter. This video newsletter would be produced by students and
shared with their peers. We have the ability to transmit from a VCR to all our classes. This grant
will provide the video digital camera, DVD/VCR, video tapes, and DVDs needed to produce the
newsletter as well as provide an additional venue for sharing student produced activities.

Students will use the video camera to tape interviews, activities in classrooms, or record students
reading their poetry, writing assignments, or readings. It will be wonderful method to enhance the
vocabulary skills of my students. Students will plan a 10 minute segment to be published at least
every two weeks. Students will also be able to produce short music videos of our students in
action around the school. This project will allow my ESL students the ability to plan their
questions, practice reading them, and then producing their use of English as a second language
while being recorded on video or DVD. Watching themselves on the video tape or DVD will also
help the students hear themselves and set goals as to language adjustments that they would like

to make. A digital video camera will be needed for production on VCRs or the computer. Using a digital video camera will allow us to either record directly to a VCR or load to the computer from the camera, edit, and then record to a DVD.

Goal Two: The purchase of computer software for English language vocabulary.
A great portion of second language acquisition is vocabulary. The use of technology helps to speed the process. Computers allow more one-on-one time especially for practicing and learning vocabulary in a second language. One of the software programs that this grant would provide for is a program called English in a Flash offered through the Renaissance Learning program. Putting a student on a computer for this repetitive vocabulary practice for 10 minutes a day will increase their second language vocabulary much quicker than just listening.

Students often learn at a higher speed when they are given practice activities such as this on the computer. The English in a Flash includes Fluent Reader software that helps give students the guided speaking practice they need to improve pronunciation, rhythm, and intonation. Provide guided speaking practice using vocabulary students have recently acquired. This program will reinforce listening skills and help students acquire initial reading skills. It will also easily manage students' guided speaking practice.

The computer and software work together as an individualized instructional tool as students read along while listening to a recording of the passage read by a native English speaker. Next, they practice repeating the passage while recording themselves. This allows them to compare their English with the recording of the native speaker.

Goal Three: The purchase of a Smartboard and projector.
The final technology tool that this grant will provide for is a Smartboard. This is an interactive whiteboard that displays the desktop of the teacher's computer. In this way the teacher can project any program that is running on the teacher's machine for the whole class. It allows teachers to illustrate curriculum information visually, reinforce English vocabulary, and provide students with a variety of visual media. The interactive whiteboard will give me the ability to access and display websites, run educational software, run live video from a camera, record, capture, highlight and review notes from a classroom discussion, deliver PowerPoint presentations and more. It is a terrific motivational and teaching tool.

In addition, the Smartboard will allow me to create whole classroom activities for students to practice the English language more effectively. For example turning simple TV games on the computer into practice for vocabulary, and then students can practice as a whole group. Students will also be able to deliver presentations to the whole class with the back up aide of the computer and Smartboard. Students love to see what you are talking about and the computer can generate a large picture for everyone to see at once. The computer is a well used tool in our classroom and the Smartboard will allow us all to look and see at once rather than being crowded around and computer and those that can't see losing interest.

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Quest Foundation for Education Grant Expenditure Plan

Item	Cost	Description
Video Camera	$400.00	Support instruction through video
Batteries and Recording Media	$100.00	Supplies for the video camera
Software (English in a Flash)	$1,399.00	Support instruction through computer technology
Software license	$668.00	$.99 per student (225 students x 3 years)
Infocus Projector Video Projector	$800.00	Used to display individual work and instruction to the whole group
Video cabling	$50.00	attachment between computer and projector and computer and Smart Board
Smartboard	$1,538.00	Projection Media coupled to the computer for instruction
Total Request	**$4,955.00**	